

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ADP-00 IO-13 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 SAJ-01 MBFR-03 RSR-01 /123 W

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R 021100Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8298

INFO AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: POLITICAL CENTER MEETING IN LISBON

REF: LISBON 2791

SUMMARY: ASSEMBLY OF LIBERALS WAS GENERALLY UNIMPRESSIVE, FROM STANDPOINT OF BOTH PARTICIPATION AND MOTIONS CARRIED. WHILE LISBON MEETING AGREED TO CARRY ON ACTIVITIES IN FUTURE, ASSEMBLY'S LACK OF SUPPORT BY INFLUENTIAL CENTRISTS LEAVES LIBERALS' FUTURE IN DOUBT. END SUMMARY.

1. MEETING OF LIBERALS HELD IN LISBON AUDITORIUM JULY 28-29 REPORTEDLY ATTENDED BY 50-90 OUT OF 500 INVITEES. PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED MOST OF 10-15 LIBERAL DEPUTIES FROM OUTGOING ASSEMBLY, PROMINENT TECHNOCRATS WHO ENTERED GOVERNMENT IN '70 AND ARE NOW OUT (MARTINS, PINTADO AND SALGUEIRO), INTELLECTUALS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH BOTH ANP AND AVEIRO FAR LEFT, AND A SCATTERING OF CIVIL
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SERVANTS. GREAT MAJORITY OF PARTICIPANTS SAID TO BE SEDES

MEMBERS. POOR TURNOUT LARGELY RESULT OF LACK OF CLEARLY DEFINED PURPOSE OR PLATFORM. CIVIL SERVANTS (INCLUDING UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS) RESTRAINED BY GOVERNMENT'S PROHIBITION ON PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, AND MEMORY OF DISCHARGE OF CIVIL SERVANTS FOLLOWING RATO INCIDENT LAST JANUARY.

2. IN PREMEETING PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 27 DEPUTY-ORGANIZER MAGALHAES MOTTA BACKED OFF FROM EARLIER ACTIVIST PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH POLITICAL PARTY IN ALL BUT NAME, AND SAID MEETING HELD TO PROVIDE GENERAL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS, WITHOUT NECESSARILY MAKING PLANS FOR FUTURE. IN APPARENT EFFORT TO AVOID RESTRICTING LABEL. MAGALHAES MOTTA SAID MEETING WOULD NOT SOLELY CONSIST OF LIKE-MINDED LIBERALS, BUT WOULD INCLUDE MANY SHADES -- FROM MONARCHISTS TO 1969 CUED CANDIDATES.

3. IN OPENING MEETING MAGALHAES MOTTA SAID FRUSTRATION IS DOMINANT THEME IN PORTUGAL IN MID-1973 AND NATION NEEDS INNOVATION AND MOVEMENT. SAID CAETANO INITIATIVES OF 1969 STALLED BY LABOR UNREST, REVOLUTIONARY (SABOTAGE) ACTIVITIES, IMPOSSIBILITY OF LIBERALIZATION WHEN REGIME IS UNDER ATTACK FROM THE LEFT, INSUFFICIENT POLITICAL WILL FAVORING DEMOCRACY, AND LACK OF SOCIAL REFORM NECESSARY TO BROADEN THE BASE OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE REGIME. IN ENSUING DISCUSSIONS VIEWS WERE EXCHANGED ON WIDE VARIETY OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES. POSITIONS CRYSTALIZED ON SECOND DAY IN DEBATE ON WHETHER MEETING SHOULD BE INSTITUTIONALIZED INTO "THIRD FORCE" WHICH MIGHT UNDERTAKE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND PRESENT CANDIDATES IN FALL 1973 ELECTIONS. FRANCISCO BALSEMAO, EDITOR OF EXPRESSO AND DEPUTY, FAVERED THIS ACTIVITY COURSE. OPPOSING, HOWEVER, WAS MORE INFLUENTIAL GROUP LED BY THREE TECHNOCRATS FORMERLY IN GOVERNMENT. THEY HELD THAT TIME IS NOT RIPE FOR POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND THAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD WORK TO BRING ABOUT GREATER POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OVER LONG TERM. IN CONCLUSION. MEETING APPROVED TWO RESOLUTIONS. FIRST CALLED FOR OPEN POLITICAL DEBATE, DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICAL LIFE THROUGH SOCIAL REFORM AND GUARANTEED RIGHTS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION. OTHER RESOLUTION CALLED FOR FUTURE SIMILAR MEETINGS, A NATIONAL CONGRESS AND URGED THAT PRESENT MEETING BECOME CATALYST FOR POLITICAL GROUPINGS WHICH WOULD SEEK TO OBTAIN OFFICIALrecognition. HOWEVER, RESOLUTION DID NOT SPECIFY HOW THESE THINGS SHOULD BE DONE RO BY WHOM. AS MANDATE OF MEETING'S ORGANIZERS LEGALLY EXPIRED JULY 28, PLANS FOR FUTURE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ARE CONSIDERED DEAD LETTER.

4. DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO DISCUSS OVERSEAS HAD BEEN A DIFFICULT ONE FOR LIBERALS, WHO RECALLED THAT FAR LEFT TALK AT AVEIRO HAD ENABLED GOP TO TAR THAT MEETING WITH COMMUNIST BRUSH. DISCUSSION CONSENSUS CALLED FOR ACCELERATION OF PRESENT AUTONOMY PROCESS AND FOR EMPHASIS ON POLITICAL RATHER THAN MILITARY SOLUTIONS. (COMMENT: FOR ONE LIBERAL UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR THIS KID GLOVE TREATMENT OF THE VITAL OVERSEAS ISSUE WAS ALMOST INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM POSITION OF ANP, AND TENDED TO DISCREDIT THE LIBERALS' MEETING IN THE EYES OF MANY.)

5. A. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO SEDES MEMBER SOMEWHAT TO THE LEFT OF MOST MEETING PARTICIPANTS, THE ORGANIZERS' EFFORTS WERE BOUND TO FAIL WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF MARTINS, PINTADO AND SALGUEIRO. HE SAID THE TECHNOCRATS' POSITION IS ONE OF BIDING THEIR TIME UNTIL SOME INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE -- SUCH AS CONCRETE PROGRESS ON RESOLVING THE OVERSEAS PROBLEM OR A NEW PRESIDENT OR PRIME MINISTER -- PRODUCES A NEW CLIMATE IN WHICH LIBERALISM CAN FLOURISH.

B. LIBERALS' MEETING IN LISBON IS 4TH ASSEMBLY ON PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SCENE IN PREPARATION FOR OCTOBER ELECTIONS -- AFTER AVEIRO, TOMAR AND OPORTO. FROM LACK OF REAL RESPONSE TO PROMOTERS' EFFORTS IT APPEARS AT THIS JUNCTURE THAT CENTRISTS IN PORTUGAL WHO ARE WARY OF THE "TRADITIONAL OPPOSITION" ON THE FAR LEFT AND ARE UNCOMFORTABLE IN THE EMBRACE OF THE ANP, WILL HAVE NO ORGANIZATIONAL VEHICLE FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LISBON02863
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730862/aaaabtuw.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 LISBON 2791
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Sep-2001 by rowellE0>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL CENTER MEETING IN LISBON
TAGS: PINT, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005